



United States Mission to the OSCE

Ongoing Violations of OSCE Principles and Commitments by the Russian Federation and the Situation in Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kate Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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We were deeply disturbed to hear of yesterday's attack on SMM monitors, which was swiftly condemned by the State Department. As described in the SMM Spot Report, a rocket-propelled grenade and multiple anti-aircraft rounds were fired at an SMM patrol when it was traveling between two Ukrainian military checkpoints between the towns of Kirove and Shumy. We note from the SMM Report that the attack originated from the southeast of the SMM patrol, from an area known to be controlled by Russia-backed separatists. The members of the SMM team immediately returned to their armored vehicle, which bore clear OSCE markings, and quickly exited the area. Fortunately, no one was injured. Once the team left the area, the firing stopped, which suggests the team was targeted.

Any attacks on, or threats to, OSCE monitors are unacceptable. We call on all parties to refrain from any actions that endanger the safety of the OSCE mission in Ukraine. We emphasize the Mission's important role in monitoring the implementation of the Minsk agreements. The SMM must have free and unrestricted access to all of Ukraine, including Crimea, in accordance with its mandate. We reiterate our strong support for the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine as it continues to work in extremely dangerous conditions, we condemn any attacks against SMM personnel and assets, and we thank the members of the SMM for their bravery and service.

This attack is but the latest consequence of the Russian Federation's continued violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in blatant disregard for its obligations under international law and its OSCE commitments. Russia's actions continue to strike at the very heart of this Organization's fundamental principles and undermine the foundations of European security. Russia has continued to fail to honor the pledges it has made in Geneva, in Berlin, and in Minsk, to work toward a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The United States and many other participating States have detailed Russia's violations of international law and of its OSCE commitments in this forum over the past several months. We reiterate our unwavering support for full implementation of the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum, and call upon the Russian Federation to honor the pledges it made in Minsk. I am certain that our Ministers will continue to address these ongoing violations, frankly and directly, next week in Basel. Today, I will focus on the human consequences of Russia's incursions into Ukraine.

Last Thursday, at the same time that we were sitting here in the Permanent Council discussing the crisis in and around Ukraine, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights released its latest report on the human rights situation in Ukraine. This is the

seventh such report that the OHCHR has produced since the crisis began, and this report is no less sobering than any of its predecessors.

We learned from the report that 4,042 people have been killed and an additional nearly 10,000 have been wounded since hostilities began in mid-April – numbers that the UN is quick to note are likely an underestimate. An average of 13 people were killed each day in September and October, despite the cease-fire.

The report also stated that in the areas of Eastern Ukraine under control of the Russia-backed separatists there is “a total breakdown in law and order, and a lack of any human rights protection for the population.” The list of serious human rights abuses by the Russia-backed separatists catalogued in the report is comprehensive in its brutality, including, “torture, arbitrary and incommunicado detention, summary executions, forced labor, sexual violence, as well as the destruction and illegal seizure of property.”

The situation in Crimea, an integral part of Ukraine, is also suffering increasing human rights abuses since the purported annexation by Russia. The OHCHR report describes widespread abuses of the freedom of expression, raids targeting Crimean Tatars, and a growing number of enforced disappearances.

Mr. Chair, last week Ambassador Tagliavini issued a strong plea not to forget the human cost of this conflict including the lives lost and irreparably damaged.

There is a way out of this conflict. The solution is straightforward: Russia must live up to all the commitments it made in Minsk. It must cease providing weapons, financing, and personnel to the separatists. It must withdraw all Russian military personnel and equipment from Ukraine and away from its border. It must return the Ukrainian side of the international border to Ukrainian control and facilitate OSCE monitoring all along that border. It must use its influence to ensure that its proxies implement all of the commitments they made in Minsk, including respecting the ceasefire and releasing all hostages.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.